

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE DC. 11.

WASHINGTON POST
31 March 1982

JACK ANDERSON

British Remain Steadfast Ally Of Americans

In World War II, the rock on which Adolf Hitler's dreams ultimately foundered was the close working relationship between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Now, 40 years later, Ronald Reagan and another British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, seem to have arrived at a similar alliance against the threat of Soviet worldwide aggression.

Top White House advisers tell me that President Reagan is greatly encouraged by Thatcher's steadfast support of his anti-Soviet policies, and would be crushed if she showed signs of wavering, as, for example, our West German allies have done.

Reagan is evidently sincere in his belief that the Kremlin poses a continuing threat to American freedom, a threat that overshadows the cut-backs in domestic programs for which he is taking so much heat. But the president has not succeeded in persuading most of our European allies that the Soviet threat is as dangerous as he thinks it is. They prefer to minimize the threat and do business with the Soviets.

The most important exception to

this attitude has been Margaret Thatcher's Britain. I sent my associate Dale Van Atta to London to gauge the depth of the British commitment. If the British are uncertain, the Reagan administration's foreign policy is in big trouble.

From interviews with military, intelligence and political sources in both London and Washington, this is the picture that emerges about Britain's position in the East-West struggle.

The British are unquestionably our strongest ally against the Soviets, but this stalwart support could be jeopardized by domestic political developments; that is, if Thatcher is unceremoniously given the heave-ho, as Churchill was at the very moment of victory in 1945.

Unlike other North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries, Britain has supported the alliance consistently and at great sacrifice, including a commitment to increase its military budget by 3 percent at a time when its economy can ill afford such an expenditure. Unemployment is far worse in Britain than in the United States, yet Thatcher has kept up her support of increased defense expenditures.

In fact, the weight of classified evidence shows that Thatcher is determined to maintain the British military commitment. A top-secret Pentagon report discloses that Britain provides bases for 156 American nuclear bombers, contributes 56 nuclear

bombers to the NATO front in West Germany and has four nuclear missile submarines of its own. The British nuclear planes and subs, as well as 400 U.S. Poseidon missiles, are under the control of the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, who has always been an American.

In addition, the British are cooperating on U.S. programs to upgrade joint nuclear missile forces so that the anti-ballistic missile defenses of Moscow can be penetrated, a vital deterrent to any Soviet plans for a first strike against the West.

The British government has also agreed to allow 160 ground-launched cruise missiles to be placed in England, a decision not without its touch of irony, considering that Britain was the first victim of the cruise missile's German ancestor, the V1 rocket of 1944.

What concerns the White House, though, is the political equation in Britain. Secret CIA analyses have warned that the Reagan-Thatcher alliance, like that of Roosevelt and Churchill, may be blown away.

And in this case, unlike the situation in 1945 when domestic policies were the cause of Churchill's defeat, the Thatcher government's determined support of Reagan policies could be a serious contributing factor to its downfall. The growing strength of leftist Labor is traceable to the public's distaste for nuclear weapons in its backyard as well as to domestic economic conditions.